

Charity fills in for Toys for Tots with gifts for kids

BY MONIFA THOMAS

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Faculty members at Philo

Carpenter Elementary School were left hoping for a Christmas miracle last week after they learned that the Marine Corps' Toys for Tots pro-

gram wouldn't be able to provide gifts for students this year.

Lucky for them, the founder of a Chicago chil-

dren's charity read about the school's plight in the Sun-Times and invited students and their families to attend a special toy giveaway.

On Saturday, the Dreams for Kids charity hosted its annual holiday party at 600 W. Washington, where hundreds of homeless and underprivileged children sang holiday songs, had their faces painted and received bags of toys from Santa himself. More than 100 volunteers were also on hand to help.

Marina Nieves brought her children, who attend Carpenter, to the party.

Nieves said she hadn't heard that the Toys for Tots gift-giving at the school had been canceled, but she was glad that Dreams for Kids stepped in to help.

"It's a very beautiful, kind thing they're doing for us," she said. "I see my kids having a good time, and that makes me grateful."

Like many of the parents attending Saturday's event, Nieves, who lost her job in June, said she would have had a tough time buying Christmas gifts.

Dreams for Kids founder



Julie Nieves, 6, a student at Carpenter Elementary School, visits with Santa at a holiday party hosted by Dreams for Kids.

BRIAN JACKSON~SUN-TIMES

Tom Tuohy said the presents were only a small part of what he wanted kids to take home from the holiday party.

"We can provide not just a

toy, but an event that shows these children that someone cares ... and that there are better days ahead," he said.

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